

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SANTIA 00459 01 OF 02 202002Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 ACDA-12 OMB-01 CG-00 DOTE-00
HA-05 EB-08 /092 W
-----087432 202117Z /64

R 201826Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7886
INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY BRAZILIA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY QUITO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SANTIAGO 459

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MPOL, MASS, MORG, PGOV, CI
SUBJECT: US-LATIN AMERICAN MILITARY RELATIONS -- CHILE

REF: 77 STATE 306726

1. THIS MESSAGE RESPONDS TO THE QUESTIONS POSED IN REFTEL FROM THE FOLLOWING CONTEXTUAL PERSPECTIVE. THE MILITARY RUN CHILE AND SEEM LIKELY TO DO SO AT LEAST THROUGH THE MID-1980S. THE MORE LIKELY SCENARIOS FOR A RETURN TO ELECTED CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT GIVE THE MILITARY AS AN INSTITUTION A MORE EXPLICIT POLITICAL ROLE THAN WAS TRUE PRIOR TO THE SEPTEMBER 1973. COUP. THEIR INFLUENCE ON WHO DOES RUN CHILE WILL LAST BEYOND THE MID-1980S. THE ISSUE IS NOT WHETHER WE WANT TO DEAL WITH THE CHILEAN MILITARY, BUT HOW BEST WE CAN STRUCTURE A RELATIONSHIP THAT GIVES US SOME INFLUENCE AT LEVELS WHERE DECISIONS ARE MADE ON MATTERS CRITICAL TO OVERALL US POLICY OBJECTIVES. OF THESE OBJECTIVES WE NOW ATTACH PRIMARY IMPORTANCE TO HUMAN RIGHTS -- THE CESSATION OF GROSS VIOLATIONS OF BASIC RIGHTS IN THE FIRST INSTANCE BUT, NOT
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 SANTIA 00459 01 OF 02 202002Z

FAR BEHIND, THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES AS THE BASIS FOR POLITICAL STABILITY. AT THE SAME TIME WE WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE SECURITY INTERESTS IN CHILE, DIRECTLY AS A MAJOR SOURCE OF COPPER AND OTHER MINERALS AND BECAUSE OF ITS CONTROL OF THE STRAIT OF MAGELLAN AND THE WESTERN SOUTH PACIFIC, MORE GENERALLY AS ONE OF THE MAJOR PLAYERS IN TERRITORIAL ISSUES (PERU IN THE NORTH -- ARGENTINA IN THE SOUTH) THAT COULD DISRUPT HEMISPHERIC

PEACE.

2. HERewith EMBASSY COMMENTS ON THE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS:

A. TO WHAT EXTENT ARE CONTINUED USG AND US MILITARY TIES WITH THE CHILEAN MILITARY NECESSARY? THEY ARE NECESSARY AS WELL AS UNAVOIDABLE. IF THERE IS AN ISSUE HERE, IN THE CHILE CASE, IT IS WHETHER WE NEED OR WANT US MILITARY AS WELL AS USG TIES. THERE HAS BEEN EVIDENCE AT TIMES OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS THAT GOC MILITARY LEADERS DISCOUNTED USG POLICY POSITIONS IN THE BELIEF THAT THEY WERE NOT SUPPORTED BY THE US MILITARY; THAT, IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, US SECURITY INTERESTS AND CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL LABBIES IN THE US WOULD PREVAIL. THESE HOPES ARE NOT ENTIERLY DEAD (MORE BELOW) BUT THE RECENT VISIT OF CINCSO GENERAL MCAULIFFE DEFINITELY ERASED ANY EXPECTATIONS FOR A NEAR-TERM THAW IN US/CHILE RELATIONS BASED ON SECURITY INTERESTS. IN THIS EMBASSY'S VIEW MILITARY-TO-MILITARY TIES CAN AND NORMALLY DO SERVE AN IMPORTANT SUPPORTIVE FUNCTION FOR US POLICY, PARTICULARLJ WHEN THE HOST COUNTRY MILITARY ARE IN POLITICAL CONTROL. AT THE HIGHER POLICY LEVELS THE OLD "SAW" THAT ONLY MILITARY CAN TALK TO MILITARY IS NOT CONFIRMED BY OUR EXPERIENCE HERE. CHILE'S GENERALS AND ADMIRALS ARE BASICALLY POLITICAL AND TO SOME EXTENT A POLITICAL/POLICY MESSAGE IS MORE EASILY RECEIED FROM A US DIPLOMATIC OFFICIAL. THE MORE POLITICAL THE CHILEAN MILITARY BECOMES THE MORE IMPORTANT IT IS THAT US POLICY SIGNALS BE TRANSMITTED

IN THE FIRST INSTANCE BY CIVILIANS. HOWEVER, AND WITHOUT PUTTING
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 SANTIA 00459 01 OF 02 202002Z

TO FINE A POINT ON PROFESSIONAL AND CASTE PECULIARITIES, US MILITARY DIALOGUE WITH THEIR CHILEAN COUNTERPARTS SERVES AN IMPORTANT AND AT TIMES VITAL RE-ENFORCEING PURPOST IN GETTING ACROSS THE US MESSAGE.

B. PRESENT STATE OF USG, US MILITARY AND INDIVIDUAL US SERVICE RELATIONS WITH THE HOST COUNTRY MILITARY; IMPORTANTCE ATTACHED BY HOSTS? AS PERCEIVED BY THE CHILEAN MILITARY RELATIONS WITH THE USG ARE IN BAD SHAPE AND (FOLLOWING THE MCAULIFFE VISIT) RELATIONS WITH THE US MILITARY, AS AN UMBRELLA INSTITUTION, LITTLE BETTER. AT THE SERVICE TO SERVICE LEVEL, WHERE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS PLAY A LARGER ROLE, THE SITUATION IS SOMEWHAT BETTER. AS BETWEEN SERVICES, ARMY TIES ARE PERHAPS THE MOST STRAINED. THE ARMY HAD LITTLE IN THE PIPELINE AT THE TIME WHEN ARMS SALSSES WERE CUT OFF AND BELIEVES IT IS PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TO THE PERUVIAN THREAT. FURTHERMORE THE ARMY IS THE SERVICE MOST CLOSELY IDENTIFIED WITH THE PINOCHET GOVERNMENT. NAVY TIES ARE STILL QUITE GOOD BUT UNDOUBTEDLY SAGGING. THE AIR FORCE, BENEFICIARY OF PIPELINE F-5'S AND A-37'S, HAS BEEN MOST FRIENDLY, BUT WILL SOON BE HURTING FOR SPARE PARTS AND OTHER MAINTENANCE ASSISTANCE. THE CHILEAN MILITARY ATTACH A GREAT DEAL OF IMPORTANCE TO RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. WE ARE THE DOMINANT REGIONAL POWER AND THE DEGREE TO WHICH WE ARE SUPPORTIVE OR HOSTILE CAN AFFECT CHILE'S VITAL INTERESTS

WITH ITS NEIGHBORS. DESPITE CURRENT DISENCHANTMENT WITH US POLICY IT IS PROBABLY ACCURATE TO SAY THAT THE CHILEAN MILITARY VIEW THE US AS ITS CLOSEST IDEOLOGICAL ALLY IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD. HOWEVER, NEITHER POTENTIALLY SERIOUS BORDER PROBLEMS WITH PERU AND ARGENTINA, NOR THE MORE GENERAL NEED TO STRENGTHEN EXTERNAL RELATIONS HAS BEEN SUFFICIENT TO DATE TO BRING ABOUT A MAJOR REVISION OF THE MILITARY'S POLITICAL OBJECTIVES FOR CHILE. THE CHILEAN MILITARY ARE NOT YET DESPERATE; NOR IS THAT PROSPECT IN SIGHT.

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PAGE 01 SANTIA 00459 02 OF 02 202006Z
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SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 ACDA-12 OMB-01 CG-00 DOTE-00
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SANTIAGO 459

C. WITHIN CURRENT US POLICY, WHAT NEAR AND MID-TERM ACTIONS CAN BE TAKEN TO MEET THE MUTUAL NEEDS OF US AND HOST COUNTRY MILITARY? THE NEAR AND MID-TERM NEEDS OF THE CHILAN MILITARY ARE TWO-FOLD: TO ENJOY AT LEAST EQUAL STANDING WITH THE PERUVIAN AND ARGENTINE MILITARIES IN THE EYES OF US PUBLIC AND OFFICIAL OPINION; TO REGAIN ACCESS TO THE US ARMS MARKET. US MILITARY NEEDS ARE MORE LATENT THAN ACTUAL. WE HOPE TO MAINTAIN PERSONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL TIES THAT WILL PERMIT CLOSE COOPERATION SHOULD US INTEREST SO REQUIRE IN THE FUTURE. IF MUTUALITY IS MEASURED BY THE LOWEST COMMON DENOMINATOR, THEN IT IS IN BOTH COUNTRIES' INTEREST TO CONTINUE AT LEAST A NOMINAL US MILITARY PRESENCE IN CHILE AND SOME PERSONNEL EXCHANGE AND JOINT TRAINING (UNITAS) EXERCISES.

D. HOW CAN HOST MILITARY SERVE THEIR INTERESTS THROUGH US TIES; IN THE ABSENCE OF US ARMS TRANSFER, CAN THE US SUFFICIENTLY SERVE ITS OWN AND HOST INTERESTS BY SUPPORT AND ADVICE? THE

OBVIOUS ANSWER IS THAT THE GOC AND ITS MILITARY SEEK TO CHANGE
OUR HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY AND LOOK TO MILITARY-TO-MILITARY COMMUNICATION

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PAGE 02 SANTIA 00459 02 OF 02 202006Z

AS A MAJOR AVENUE TO PURSUE THAT GOAL. FURTHERMORE, THE
CONTINUATION OF EVEN THE PRESENT LOW LEVEL OF SUCH RELATIONS CAN
BE PLAYED INTRA-REGIONALLY AS EVIDENCE THAT US/CHILE RELATIONS
ARE NOT AS BAD AS POTENTIAL OPPONENTS MAY WANT TO BELIEVE.
IN THE LONGER RUN, AND ASSUMING A RETURN TO MORE NORMAL
US/CHILE RELATIONS, IT IS NOT CLEAR TO US THAT SUPPORT AND ADVICE
CAN BE SEPARATED FROM ARMS SUPPLY. THERE IS NO REQUIREMENT THAT
THE US BE THE SOLE SUPPLIER OF HARDWARE. BUT UNLESS THERE IS A
REASONABLE DEGREE OF ACCESS TO US EQUIPMENT THE GOC MAY LOOK
ELSEWHERE FOR MILITARY TRAINING AND ASSISTANCE AS WELL. THERE
IS ALSO A QUESTION OF SUBREGIONAL COMPARABILITY. THE US HAS
AN INTEREST IN AVOIDING LOCAL HOSTILITIES, AND OUR INFLUENCE TO
THAT END IS PROBABLY GREATER TO THE EXTENT WE ACCORD SIMILAR
TREATMENT TO PERU AND ARGENTINA AS TO CHILE.

E. SIGNIFICANCE OF EXCHANGE-TYPE AND OTHER TRAINING PROGRAMS
IN SERVING BROAD US INTERESTS? AS THE CURRENT ASSISTANCE
PIPELINE DRIES UP THESE TYPES OF PROGRAMS WILL CONSTITUTE ALMOST
THE ENTIRETY OF THE US/CHILE MILITARY RELATIONSHIP. THEY SUPPORT
THE LONG-TERM US INTEREST IN MAINTAINING FRIENDLY AND
COOPERATIVE TIES WITH THE CHILEAN MILITARY. TO SOME EXTENT THEY
MAY ASSIST IN CONVEYING TO THE CHILEAN MILITARY THE STRENGTH
OF US FEELING REGARDING DEMOCRACY AND RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS.

F. TRENDS FOR HOST COUNTRY EXPENDITURES FOR ARMS FROM THIRD
COUNTRIES? CHILE HAS NO ALTERNATIVE. THREATENED IN THE NORTH BY
PERU AND IN THE SOUTH BY ARGENTINA, IT NEEDS ARMS. AT PRESENT
CHILE WOULD RETURN QUICKLY TO PRIMARY RELIANCE ON THE US WERE
LEGISLATIVE CONSTRAINTS LIFTED. THE LONGER THE PRESENT EMBARGO
CONTINUES, AND PARTICULARLY IF EUROPEAN SOURCES ARE REOPENED,
THE LESS LIKELY THE PROSPECT OF RENEWED DEPENDENCE ON THE US.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL MILITARY RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978SANTIA00459
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780031-0597
Format: TEL
From: SANTIAGO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780139/aaaabhem.tel
Line Count: 209
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 3116c7e1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 STATE 306726
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3738815
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: US-LATIN AMERICAN MILITARY RELATIONS -- CHILE
TAGS: MPOL, MASS, MORG, PGOV, CI, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/3116c7e1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014